

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BROWN COUNTY
VETERANS' RECOGNITION SUBCOMMITTEE

Pursuant to Section 19.84, Wis. Stats., a regular meeting of the **Brown County Veterans' Recognition Subcommittee** was held on Tuesday, March 15, 2016 at 4:30 p.m. in Room 201 of the Northern Building, 305 E. Walnut Street, Green Bay, Wisconsin.

PRESENT: Chair Bernie Erickson, Tracy Rosinski, Ed Koslowski, Carl Soderberg, Duane Pierce, Jim Haskins, Jerry Polus, Joe Witkowski, Louise Dahlke

EXCUSED: Rosemary Desisles, Delores Pierce

****Running Total of Veterans' Certificates: 1728**

1. Call Meeting to Order.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Bernie Erickson at 4:30 pm.

2. Invocation.

3. Approve/Modify Agenda.

Joe Witkowski indicated that he had to leave the meeting early and therefore he would like to give his report following Item 4.

Motion made by Jim Haskins, seconded by Ed Koslowski to approve as amended. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. Approve/Modify Minutes of February 16, 2016.

It was pointed out that under Item 7, the word "unexecuted" should be changed to "unexcused".

Motion made by Duane Pierce, seconded by Joe Witkowski to approve as corrected. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Joe Witkowski gave his report at this time. He said that he had recently seen an article in the paper regarding the Wounded Warriors Project and he has strong feelings about this charity after learning how much of the donations actually go to help veterans. Witkowski read the following from the article, "The Board of Wounded Warriors Project, the national veterans' adversary group that has come under criticism for handling of donations and spending has ousted two top executives following an independent review of the finances". Former employees were also interviewed and one former employee said, "The Wounded Warriors Project spends money in a way that is the equivalent of what the military calls fraud, waste and abuse". The article also stated that to help restore trust neither Steve Nardizzi nor Al Giordano are with the organization anymore. Witkowski wondered if anyone on the Subcommittee has noticed any change with the Wounded Warriors Project and if they would be allowed to have a table at the Fair for the Appreciation Day. Ed Koslowski said that the Wounded Warriors Project has never asked for a table and the Fair, and, secondly, one of the rules of the Fair is that nobody can solicit donations.

CVSO Jerry Polus added that the Chairman of the Wounded Warriors Project was on the Bill O'Reilly show recently and acknowledged that they need to make changes as to how the donations are used. The Chairman did not make any accusations of fraud or anything else, but just acknowledged that changes need to be made.

It was noted that there are many organizations that use Wounded Warriors in their name, but what is being discussed at this meeting is the Wounded Warriors Project.

Witkowski also asked about the details of the events on March 25 at the VFW for Lynn Geiser's 40th birthday. Koslowski said he is working with Geiser on this. He said that the American Legion, Vietnam Vets and AMVETS are involved. The event will be held from 7:00 pm – midnight and there will be a DJ and door prizes and some speakers. The goal is to raise \$3,000 to be used for activities and help for women veterans. It is a Hope 4 Vets event and Koslowski would be happy to take any more donations or prizes for the event.

5. **Update re: Honor Rewards Program.**

Jerry Polus reported that the Honor Rewards program is moving ahead very well. Brown County has been added to the Honor Rewards website and there are already some businesses signed up. The website can be viewed at www.honorrewards.com. Polus has sent letters out to all of the area business associations and chambers who will be sharing the letters with their respective businesses. He is hoping to officially announce the program around Memorial Day. Polus is hopeful that a number of businesses will sign up before then. He said that when the program is officially launched it will be explained that one of four cards will be accepted by the participating businesses. The cards that will be accepted are as follows: military retiree card, VA healthcare enrollment card, Wisconsin driver's license with veteran identifier or Honor Rewards card.

6. **Possible Discussion re: 2016 Veterans' Appreciation Day at the Brown County Fair.**
A. 25th Anniversary of Desert Storm.

Erickson confirmed that the 25th Anniversary of Desert Storm will be observed at the Fair and he thought that there would be pretty good attendance. This year the Fair will run from August 17 – 21 and Veterans Appreciation Day will be August 20.

Louise Dahlke asked if the group was willing to move the time of the event up so that the Fair could serve them better. The Subcommittee was agreeable to a time change. Dahlke noted that they need the information as soon as possible as the flyers will be printed soon. Haskins noted that the Fair Board has asked for a timeline of the events. Erickson said that the timeline worked out well last year and he felt a similar time line should be used this year as well, especially having the band perform both before and after the ceremony. Erickson said that everything could be moved up a smidge and that should alleviate concerns with the rodeo. He asked Polus to bring last year's schedule to the next meeting for review. After a discussion of the timeline, it was determined that the tent will be open at 10:00 am and the entire event should be concluded by 4:30 pm. The ceremony will be held at 3:00 pm and the band will play for about an hour following the ceremony.

Dahlke said the Fair Board asked if the Brown County Fair Association was listed on the banner as a sponsor. Koslowski said that there is no sponsorship whatsoever on any of the banners. A discussion ensued about adding sponsors on the posters that Polus distributes, but those already contain a lot of information. The band was also discussed. Polus stated that he has been in touch with a group called Rapid Impulse. The leader of the band is a graduate of the Veterans Treatment Court. The price of the band is negotiable and Erickson felt that they should be paid the same as last year's band was paid. He wanted to be sure that the band played for an hour before the event as well as an hour after the ceremony. Polus talked about the sponsorship of the band. He said that he talked to some women from Humana who were interested in supporting veterans programs and he told them about the Fair event. The Humana ladies were fairly certain that they could get approval to sponsor the band, however, Heartland Hospice has sponsored the band in the past. After discussing this, it was decided that Polus would pursue Humana to sponsor the band and Heartland could put their money into a nicer give away from their table in the tent. Koslowski said that another option may be to have Heartland sponsor a reflection area for a fallen comrade display. He was thinking of having a tent with a cot inside and some tables and an empty foot locker and packed duffel bag signifying the fallen comrade on his journey home. Koslowski would also like to have an area where thoughts and feelings can be shared and then left in the empty foot locker. Koslowski said the first thing he has to do is find a tent, and if he is able to do that, he will pursue this.

Haskins said that he will contact the TV stations for coverage of the event. Koslowski said that in the past there was some confusion as to the times of the event and it was reported differently in the paper than it was

on TV. Haskins said that he will work with the Fair Board to be sure that all information is correct. He said that when he goes to the TV stations to talk about the event he gives them one of Polus's flyers so he knows he is presenting the correct information.

7. Discussion and decision re: non-attending Subcommittee members.

Erickson reported that Lynn Geiser has taken a new job out of town and he will contact her to find out if she can still serve on this Subcommittee. If she is no longer able to be part of this group, a decision will need to be made as to how many people we want on the Subcommittee. He has a few leads of people who have made requests to join the group and he will keep everyone updated. Koslowski thought it may be good to have some of the County Board members on the Subcommittee to get some exposure, and he also suggested that representation from the Desert Vets may be a good idea.

8. Report from CVSO Jerry Polus.

Polus did not have anything to add other than what he already brought forward above.

9. Comments from Carl Soderberg.

Carl Soderberg updated the Subcommittee on H.R. 1769 which pertains to exposure to Agent Orange and how it affects veterans and their grandchildren and great grandchildren. He said that the State Council of the Vietnam Veterans Association has been pushing the bill and trying to educate their members and the public and also advocate for it. He wanted to give a quick update on this and said that it has moved through two separate committees in the House and is reported out and is waiting to be scheduled on the floor for a vote. There are 179 co-sponsors out of 435 Congressman. Representative Ribble will be joining as a co-sponsor to make 180. Soderberg noted that normally when something has 100 co-sponsors, it is a pretty good sign it should be considered. There are also 40 co-sponsors out of 100 in the Senate.

Soderberg said that the Bill would designate one US VA medical center as a research center for treatment and diagnosis of descendants of veterans exposed to toxic substances while serving as members of the Armed Forces. The idea would be to study children and grandchildren of primarily Vietnam veterans who have been exposed to Agent Orange to create an empirical, scientific, statistically accurate database. The database would then be used to determine if there should be different benefits, if descendants should be eligible to qualify for presumptive symptoms and similar things. More information on this Bill is provided in the report attached. Soderberg will keep this Subcommittee advised of further developments on the Bill. Pierce added that there is information on this available on the VVA website. Rosinski added that there will be an Agent Orange Town Hall Meeting on March 29, 2016 beginning at 1:00 pm at the Wisconsin Veterans Home in King.

Koslowski asked if this program would be expanded to burn pits for Desert Vets. Soderberg said that that would be the next step, but there is nothing definitive as of this point. Polus stated that that was a good question and that he recently received an e-mail that veterans who feel they were exposed to burn pits should ask for a registry exam specific to people exposed to burn pits.

10. Report from Committee Members Present (Erickson, Dahlke, Desisles, Haskins, Geiser, Koslowski, Pierce, Rosinski & Witkowski).

Erickson reported that he has been working with Jerry Polus and Internal Auditor Dan Process to have donated funds carried over from year to year in the donation account rather than being returned to the County's general fund at the end of the year. Approval for this was granted at the last Human Services Committee and it will now go to the full County Board for approval.

On the subject of donations, Polus said that someone who organized a dart tournament came into his office a few weeks ago to donate the proceeds of the tournament. Last year the proceeds were given to the Vet Center, but the organizers were not real happy about how the funds were utilized so this year they gave the

funds to Polus's office for the emergency fund. The donation was in the amount of \$2,025 plus \$250 worth of gas cards. So far this year, without soliciting, over \$4,500 has been donated to the emergency fund.

Erickson continued that this Saturday Polus will be bringing about 8 disabled veterans to a trout pond sponsored by the Green Bay Area Great Lakes Sport Fishing Club. The veterans will be able to catch fish and the club will then clean the fish and the veterans can take them home.

Erickson also noted that he just received notification that veterans ID cards will now be valid identification for voting purposes.

-Dahlke did not have anything further to report other than what she brought forward above.

-Haskins passed around a picture showing which cards would be accepted at the polls as approved identification for voters. He also read an article about a WW II Veteran who had recently been denied the right to vote because he did not have appropriate identification, even though he had a military ID card from his service.

-Koslowski said that he would like to see the dates of the Fair included in the minutes. These dates have been included in Item 6 above. He also wanted to know if Rolling Thunder was available for the Fair. Pierce responded that he did not know if they would be available for the table ceremony, but they would probably be able to set the table for the static display.

-Pierce reported that the quarterly LZ get-together will be held on March 21 at 5:00 pm at the Pearly Gates. There will be food specials and prizes and they will also be selling tickets for the Harley raffle. Pierce continued that Vietnam Veterans Day is March 29 and encouraged everyone to thank a vet. He also reported that he had attended a listening session held by Mike Gallagher who will be running for Reed Ribble's open seat. Gallagher is an Iraqi Veteran and wanted to get an idea of what the local vet issues are. This listening session was attended by about 15 – 18 veterans and Gallagher seemed positive about the issues and concerns of the vets. Pierce also reminded the group about the Pow Wow being held on Armed Forces Weekend in Keshena. The event will start with a flag raising ceremony in the bowl and this year they are honoring all Vietnam and Vietnam era veterans. Rolling Thunder will be doing a table ceremony on Sunday afternoon. Pierce will provide more information on this event at the next meeting. Veterans, children under 5 and elders get into the event free.

-Rosinski shared information on a Sportsman's Banquet being sponsored by Outfitters 4 Patriots. More information can be found on the attached flyer. She also noted that representatives of this group will be attending the next meeting to talk about the event further. Rosinski also reported that a Veterans Benefit Fair will be held at Ho Chunk in Wisconsin Dells on March 29, 2016. Veterans will receive free admission, free parking and free buffet with veteran's identification and there will also be a flag raising ceremony to recognize Vietnam Veterans Day. Finally, Rosinski reported on Ft. McCoy's Armed Forces Day Open House which will be held on May 21, 2016 from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm; see attached for more information.

11. **Such Other Matters as Authorized by Law.** None.

12. **Adjourn.**

Motion made by Jim Haskins, seconded by Duane Pierce to adjourn at 5:25 pm. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Therese Giannunzio
Recording Secretary

Summary: H.R.1769 —Toxic Exposure Research Act of 2015 (114th Congress, 2015-16)

4/14/2015 - Introduced in House

- Referred to Veterans' Affairs Committee and Armed Services Committee

4/23/2015 – Subcommittee on Health (Veterans' Affairs Committee) hearing

5/15/2015 – Subcommittee on Health amend, vote out to full Committee

2/25/2016 – discharged from Armed Services Committee

2/25/2016 – Amended, voted out of Committee (Veteran's Affairs) to consideration by House

179 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives

(Rep. Ribble is joining as co-sponsor, to make 180)

companion bill in US Senate (S. 901) has 40 co-sponsors in the Senate

Bill Summary: Toxic Exposure Research Act of 2015

(summary written by the Congressional Research Service)

Directs the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to select a VA medical center to serve as the national center for research on the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions of the biological children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren of individuals exposed to toxic substances while serving as members of the Armed Forces that are related to such exposure.

Requires: (1) the Department of Defense (DOD) or the head of a federal agency to make available to the VA for review records held by DOD, an Armed Force, or that federal agency that might assist the VA in making determinations regarding individuals and descendants afflicted with a health condition as a result of such exposure; (2) the VA and DOD or such agency head to jointly establish a mechanism for the availability and review of records by the VA; and (3) the national center to employ at least one licensed clinical social worker to coordinate access of individuals to appropriate social and health care programs and to handle case management. Establishes an Advisory Board to oversee and assess the national center and to advise the VA regarding the center's work.

Directs DOD to declassify documents (other than documents that would materially and immediately threaten national security) related to any known incident in which at least 100 members of the Armed Forces were exposed to a toxic substance that resulted in at least one case of an associated disability.

Directs the VA to conduct a national outreach and education campaign directed toward members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their family members to communicate information on: (1) incidents of exposure of members of the Armed Forces to toxic substances, health conditions resulting from such exposure, and the potential long-term effects; and (2) the national center. Requires DOD and the Department of Health and Human Services to assist the VA in implementing such campaign.



2nd Annual
SPORTSMANS BANQUET

**AT 'STADIUM VIEW SPORTS BAR'
IN GREEN BAY, WI**

- ★ 100% NONPROFIT ALL FUNDS GO TO THE OUTINGS
- ★ HELP US RAISE FUNDS TO TAKE DISABLED VETERANS
AND CHILDREN HUNTING & FISHING

TICKET COST: \$40.00

INCLUDES DINNER AND A DOOR PRIZE ENTRY

**GUN AND CROSSBOW RAFFLES
MISC. OUTDOOR GEAR RAFFLES**

ENC @ (920) 883-5279 ENC@slm920@gmail

**CALL MARK AT (920) 227-3658
OR STOP AT STADIUM VIEW
TO GET YOUR TICKETS**

MAY 22ND ★ 5:00PM



Veterans Benefit Fair

Tuesday, March 29th, 2016

Vietnam Veterans Day

9:00 am – 3:00 pm

**Ho-Chunk Gaming Wisconsin Dells
S3214 County Rd BD / Hwy 12 Baraboo, WI**

- **FREE – admission, parking**
(free buffet – w/proof of veterans status)
- **Get answers about your eligibility**
- **Get information about your benefits**
(compensation, pension, etc...)
- **Assistance with applying for certain benefits**
- **Dog tags (Vets Center)**
- **Additional Community Services**

2016 Fort McCoy Armed Forces Day Open House

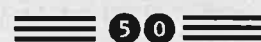
FUN FOR ALL AGES:

- Guided bus tours
- Military Equipment Displays
- Face painting
- Personalized Dog Tags
- Historic World War II buildings
- Sandbag filling station
- Refreshments available & much more!



**Saturday, May 21
9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

Fort McCoy is a Commemorative Partner with the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration.



Join us as we recognize, thank and honor Vietnam Veterans and their families.

Located between Sparta & Tomah, Wis., off of Hwy 21.

**FREE
ADMISSION**

*Enter at Gate 15 & follow signs.
Adults must have photo ID.
Questions? Call 608-388-2407
or visit www.mccoy.army.mil*

**PUBLIC
WELCOME!**